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To cite this Article:

Alakoski, L. & Tikkanen, I. (2014): Dimensions of perceived pleasure in tourism services, The 5th International Research Symposium in Service Management, June 8-12, 2014, Pärnu, Estonia, Conference Proceedings, paper 005-04, ISSN 1694-0938.

<http://www.irssm5.pc.ut.ee/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Programme-IRSSM5-May-29d.pdf>

HUOM! TÄMÄ ON RINNAKKAISTALLENNE. KÄYTÄ VIITTAUKSESSA ALKUPERÄISTÄ LÄHDETTÄ:

Viittaa tähän artikkeliin:

Alakoski, L. & Tikkanen, I. (2014): Dimensions of perceived pleasure in tourism services, The 5th International Research Symposium in Service Management, June 8-12, 2014, Pärnu, Estonia, Conference Proceedings, paper 005-04, ISSN 1694-0938.

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April 14, 2015

Alakoski, L. & Tikkanen, I. (2014), "Dimensions of perceived pleasure in tourism services", The 5th International Research Symposium in Service Management, June 8-12, 2014, Pärnu, Estonia, Conference Proceedings, paper 005-04, ISSN 1694-0938.
<http://www.irssm5.pc.ut.ee/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Programme-IRSSM5-May-29d.pdf>

Dimensions of perceived pleasure in tourism services

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Abstract

Purpose – The aim of this paper is to explore, what kind of pleasure is perceived by the consumers in tourism services.

Design/methodology/approach – Hedonic consumption and pleasure are introduced, and the concept of consumer value and its dimensions are discussed based on the recent research. The link between service experiences, experience value and value-in-use is outlined briefly. Prior research on “multi-sensation” as a concept is illustrated. Five qualitative case studies described in the Bachelor’s theses that were made in 2011 and 2012 are analysed.

Findings – The emerged dimensions of pleasure based on the customers’ event service experiences and judgments were classified into the four categories as follows: basic senses as well as emotional, social, and functional dimensions. Subsequently, the emerged dimensions of pleasure were categorized according to the four types of (product) pleasure, namely physio-pleasures (including basic senses); psycho-pleasures (including emotional and functional dimensions); socio-pleasures (including social dimensions); and ideo-pleasures (including dimensions of service meanings and personal value).

Practical implications – The practical implications for the tourism service providers indicate that the emerged four types of pleasure and their dimensions offer ideas for conceptualizing tourism services focusing on the customers' perceived experiences and judgements.

Originality/value – The results offer ideas and tools for the marketing managers in tourism and organisations for planning and implementing tourism services based on pleasure.

Keywords Experience, Event, Multisensory, Pleasure, Service, Tourism, Value-in-use

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

During the last decades, value has been a topical theme in consumer research. Today, experienced value interests especially tourism service researchers and practitioners. E.g. Lin (2010) found out that there is a positive effect between the customers' involvement levels and experience value.

This paper focuses on dimensions of perceived pleasure based on event service experiences in tourism services by utilizing the five empirical cases and their results made in the research project called "Multisensory service experience and service design in tourism companies" ("Matkailijan moniaistinen palvelukokemus"). The project focused on how to use service design methods when measuring effectiveness of multiple senses and viral messages in a marketing situation. The key partners in the project entailed Laurea University of Applied sciences and VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland. Moreover, several companies and other partners from the field of tourism in Finland participated in the project. The project was financed by Tekes, namely the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation. The project was implemented between the years 2010 - 2012. (Multisensorisuus, 2013) One of the authors acted as the project manager in the project.

The research problem reads as follows:

What kind of pleasure do the consumers perceive in tourism services?

The research design is explorative, and the viewpoint of the consumer is applied. Business-to-business and consumer tourism services are applied in the five secondary data cases.

Hedonic consumption and pleasure

The famous article on hedonic consumption and how consumers seek pleasure and enjoyment was presented by Hirschman and Holbrook (1982). Hedonic consumption was defined as follows: “those facets of consumer behavior that relate to the multisensory, fantasy, and emotive aspects of one’s experience with products” (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Alba and Williams, 2013). The Free Dictionary (2013) defined pleasure as follows: 1. The state or feeling of being pleased or gratified; 2. A source of enjoyment or delight; 3. Amusement, diversion, or wordly enjoyment; 4. Sensual gratification or indulgence; and finally, 5. One’s preference or wish.

Alba and Williams (2013) reviewed research on hedonic consumption. They introduced two perspectives to pursuing utilitarian or hedonic objectives. First, the focus in a goal-based perspective is on whether the consumer has utilitarian or hedonic objectives. Second, a motivational perspective focuses on the meaning to achieve a hedonic objective.

Alba and Williams (2013) classified the sources and determinants of pleasure into the following two viewpoints, namely pleasure derived from the product and pleasure gained from person-product interaction. Three approaches were included in the pleasure in the product aspect: aesthetics and design; having vs. doing; and essences. The features found psychologically pleasurable by the consumers include thought, care, and style, or alternatively the product’s basic essence, its purity and authenticity. (Alba and Williams, 2013) The levels of understanding products and the product features (Norman, 2004; Alba and Williams, 2013) are named as the visceral level (aesthetic response); behavioural level (function, performance, usability); and reflective level (meaning and interpretation). The four types of product pleasures (Jordan, 2000; Alba and Williams, 2013) entail physio-pleasures (emanating from the senses); socio-pleasures (emanating from interpersonal and group relationships); psycho-pleasures (emanating from one’s emotional and cognitive reactions to product use); and ideo-pleasures (emanating more broadly from product meanings and personal values).

Pleasure from person-product interactions included two approaches: pleasure from expectations and pleasure from engagement. Seeking (and finding) pleasure included three approaches: judging future pleasure; present as prologue (satiation and adaptation, visceral states); and past as prologue (recalled moments, abstraction and reconstruction). (Alba and Williams, 2013) In their study, Alba and Williams (2013) focused on “when, how and why consumers find pleasure in the

products and events they experience”. In this paper, the empirical data comprises event services in tourism services, and utilizes Alba and Williams’ (2013) results.

Consumer value and its dimensions

Theoretical discussion on consumer value and the consumer perceived value is extensive focusing on the perceived value in services. In 1980’s, Zeithaml (1988) gave four different definitions for value including price, want in a product, quality and benefits vs. sacrifice. In 1990’s, the customer perceived value was defined by Ravald and Grönroos (1996; Monroe, 1991) as the ratio of perceived benefits vs. perceived sacrifice. These two definitions both emphasized economic aspects.

In 2000’s, Gallarza and Gil Saura (2006) wrote that the consumer value concept originates from the two dimensions of consumer behaviour, namely the economic and the psychological. They added that the term perceived value and consumer value should be regarded as synonymous. In 2010’s, Bradley and Sparks (2012) formulated the following sentence: “value ... is a subjective, contextually based, comparative judgment that varies widely between individuals, between groups, and over time.”

Bradley and Sparks (2012) introduced the number of value dimensions, including monetary, functional, emotional, prestige/reputational, and symbolic/self-expressive dimensions (see e.g. Gallarza and Gil Saura, 2006; Holbrook, 1999; Lemmink *et al.*, 1998; Petrick, 2002; Sanzhes *et al.*, 2006; Ruiz *et al.*, 2008; Sweeney and Soutar, 2001; Woodall, 2003).

Three typologies of consumer perceived value with dimensions have been introduced. First, Sheth *et al.* (1991; Sweeney and Soutar, 2001) introduced PERVAL scale including the following value dimensions: emotional value, social value and two types of functional value (price/value for money and performance/quality). Second, Holbrook’s (1999, 5, 12) typology included two- and three dimensional conceptual framework of consumer value as follows: self-oriented (active/reactive) and other-oriented (active/reactive) vs. extrinsic and intrinsic. The typology presents the following eight types of consumer value: efficiency, excellence, status, esteem, play, aesthetics, ethics, and spirituality. Webster and Rennie (2011) employed Holbrook’s (1999) consumer value typology and studied the role pleasurable consumption plays in the consumers’ lives in the context of leisure travel. The findings indicated that “pleasure is much more than

self-indulgence and immediate gratification. Issues of competency, both active effort and appreciation of others' abilities, are apparent”.

Third, Helkkula *et al.* (2012) adopted a phenomenological perspective and conceptualized “value in the experience” as “an intrasubjective, socially intersubjective, context- and situation-specific phenomenon that is both lived and imaginary, constructed based on previous, current, and imaginary future experiences and is temporal”. Then “value resides not in the object of consumption, but in the experience of consumption” (cf. Frow and Payne, 2007, 91). Helkkula *et al.* (2010) developed a framework for examining phenomenological value, VALCONEX. The framework composed of different aspects of value-in-context experiences: individual vs. social; lived vs. imaginary; past-present-future. Also a single event versus cumulative events were included, which cumulatively emerged as a type of a hermeneutic spiral.

Service experience, experience value and value-in-use

Sandström *et al.* (2008) proposed a framework for a new perspective on the total service experience, the dimensions which influence it, and how a service experience is linked to value in use. According to Sandström *et al.* (2008), value is realized when a service is used. The users of services include both the co-creators and the judges of service value. Berry *et al.* (2002; Sandström *et al.*, 2008) concluded that a total service experience consists of both functional and emotional dimensions. In the framework (Sandström *et al.*, 2008), a service experience is the sum total of the functional and emotional outcome dimensions of any service. The value in use is based on the customer's evaluation of the service experience.

From the perspective of experiential marketing developed by Schmitt (1999), experience can be divided into senses, feelings, thinking, acting, and relating. The experience refers to the complex psychological feelings of the customers when faced with products and services, but “experience” has also the following characteristics: heterogeneity; external clues bear more importance than internal clues; and finally, the lag effect of value. Lin's (2010) findings indicated that when the customers have positive moods it also has a positive impact on the experience value, when compared to the negative moods. However, the customers' experience value may vary caused by environmental atmospheres and self-efficacy.

Based on Alba and Williams' (2013), Helkkula's *et al.* (2012), and Sandström's *et al.* (2008) articles, the following chain in the formation of perceived pleasure and value in use are introduced for this paper:

Utilitarian and hedonic motives (a goal-based perspective/a motivational perspective) → Products/Events → Consumption → Aspects of One's Experience (multisensory, fantasy, emotive) → Happiness and pleasure → Consumer value (value in use).

“Multi-sensation” as a concept

The management of consumer experiences has been discussed in service firms. Consumer experiences does not only have an impact on the success of a firm, but it also determines the consumers' satisfaction level (Keillor *et al.*, 2003). However, the consumer experience takes place during the interaction of a service process, and it is evaluated by the consumer. Activating multiple senses gives a stronger sense of authenticity and experience, and this way makes the consumer happier with the experience. According to the experience pyramid (Leofinland, 2013), emotional and mental levels of the consumer experience are the most meaningful for the consumer and thus are also seen as the most valuable for him/her.

According to Schmitt (1999), Lindstrom and Kotler (2005), and Lindstrom (2005), a firm often develops its brand and services based upon its sensory experiences. The five common senses are sight, smell, taste, sound, and touch. They are linked to the memory and may arouse emotions. Pleasant scents create pleasant states of moods; sounds helps us generate moods by creating feelings and emotions; and smell and taste are closely linked. However, the sense of smell is more sensitive and it is connected to our memory. The research results have indicated that stimulating multiple senses at the same time will result in better customer experiences compared to stimulating only one sense. It seems that a multi-sensational option is better than stimulating only one sense one at a time. (Lindstrom, 2009, pp. 152 - 153)

Experiences and emotional responses form the key content in tourism from the viewpoint of consumers and tourism service providers (Lüthje, 2001, 11; Rääkkönen, 2007). The experience builds up events and feelings, that emerge before, during and afterwards in the memories of the event. The experiences have an impact on how satisfied the tourists are with their trip. The experiences may differ from what the service provider has aimed for. Isacsson *et al.* (2010) stated

that multisensory marketing in the tourism sector is at its early-stage, because only a few companies apply multisensory marketing in their campaigns.

Methodology

The secondary data were collected from the five Bachelor's theses and their qualitative case studies made by the five Bachelors' students at Laurea University of Applied Sciences between the years 2010 and 2012. One of the two authors acted as the supervisor for those theses, which increases the reliability of the results. Table I briefly summarizes the case studies of the project called "Multisensory service experience and service design in tourism companies". All of the five cases and the learning of the project are available on the web pages of the project (www.multisensorisuus.fi).

The author	Name of the study	The objective
Alhonen (2012)	Multisensory Customer Experience in Eco-Tourism (9 participants)	The purpose of the study was to determine how the nature tours impact the customers' expectations, how the story design and multisensory aspects affect the experience immediately after the trip and one week later.
Palo (2011)	Mapping Sensory Perceptions and the Effects of Storytelling during a Nature Tour – Case Magic of Nuuksio Ltd (6 participants)	The first objective was to survey the experienced sensory perceptions on a nature tour. The second objective was to discover how storytelling affects one's sensory perceptions on a nature tour.
Lipiäinen (2012)	Mapping Customer Experience Evaluation Methods - Case Event Company Services (10 participants)	The objective was to determine the quality of the service from the end-user's point of view, especially how it was experienced as well as how the multisensory perspective was.
Järvinen and Walther (2011)	The Functionality of Service Design Tools from a Multisensory Perspective – Case Linnanmäki (48 participants)	The purpose was to find the most functional probe method when testing the service experience at a light carnival event, such as Valokarnevaalit which is held at the Amusement Park Linnanmäki which was also the partner company throughout the project.
Karonen (2012)	Meaningful Sensory Experience for Customers - Case Linnanmäki	The purpose was to find out how multisensing affects the customers' service experience in an environment such as the Carnival of Light in Linnanmäki.

Table I. Secondary data comprising five case studies

All the aforementioned five qualitative case studies followed a similar theoretical framework comprising service marketing, “multi-sensations”, and tourism services. The perspective of a consumer was applied, and understanding of a consumer, and his/her perception of service experience was explored. Interviews and observations were used as data collection methods. In this paper, the data composed of the selected five Bachelor’s thesis reports and their findings that were analysed by the two authors based on both their subjective and common understanding. A thematic analysis (cf. Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008) was applied when interpreting the data and theming the data into the dimensions. In this paper, the implemented data analysis could also be called a content analysis (cf. Jennings, 2010), where the empirical data are interpreted and reduced into categories.

Results

The research question reads as follows: “What kind of pleasure do the consumers perceive in tourism services?” In Table II, the emerged dimensions of pleasure are classified into four groups, namely basic senses as well as emotional, social, and functional dimensions.

<i>Type of tourism service</i>	<i>Basic senses</i>	<i>Emotional dimensions</i>	<i>Social dimensions</i>	<i>Functional dimensions</i>
Nature-based tourism service (Alhonen, 2012)	Stories related to the history of the Finnish forest culture; how a human being has survived in a natural environment without help from other people; connection between a human being and nature. Mystery of a forest and its creatures.			
(B-to-B service)	Stories about nature told by a wilderness guide; picking up mushrooms with other group members; learning new facts about mushrooms; dressing in similar coats with the cowl to protect oneself against bears; having dinner at the camp fire after the outing.			
	Stony forest path; walking through the forest; listening to voices and looking at the scenery of a forest; smelling the scent of the forest; drinking sap of a birch; tasting blueberries; observing the lake scenery; fishing; taking pleasure in the beauty of a lake scenery.			
	<i>Hearing, Listening, Looking, Seeing, Tasting, Touching</i>	<i>Fear, Perceiving: *creature existence, *darkness, *excitement, *history, *pleasant feelings, *survival in nature, *wilderness, Seeking the forest scenery, Sweeping lake vistas, Unforgettable memories, Willingness to indulge</i>	<i>Co-experience, Learning new</i>	<i>Breath of wind, Scent, Scent of the forest</i>

Nature-based tourism service (Palo, 2011)	Luxorius feeling concerning the camp fire; sitting around a camp fire on the reindeer skin. Magical feeling about the drumming shaman; and the guide's stories about trolls and other tale-like characters.			
(B-to-B service)	Mystique was created into the evening which produced strong memories. Common moments and discussions with other participants. The guide's stories, which made stumps, ant nests and junipers alive. Shared atmosphere and the importance of existence with other participants.			
	Burying the bad things under the three roots. Touching the mossy stones. Listening to the whispering trees in the forest around the camp fire. Frying sausages at the camp fire.			
	Hearing, Seeing, Tasting, Touching	Awareness of senses, Finding strong memories, Magical feeling, Perceiving: *authenticity, *creature existence	Attendance, Co-experience, Shared experiences	Doing by hands, Scent, Sensing the campfire, Sense of warmth
Event company services (Lipiäinen, 2012)	Succeeding in doing and participating equally.			
(B-to-B service)	Participating in the event influenced the feelings and internal meanings (energy, creativity), felt amusing and cheerful. The effects of the event included interaction and well-being at work.			
	The event lowered the stress levels of the participants. Other participants' stimulation, pats on shoulders, improved eye contacts, easy-going communication, active discussions and genuine interest shown towards others.			
	Throwing oneself together into frolics, causing laughing, joking, and other kinds of playing around and heightened team spirit.			
	Activities and functional problem solving tasks were completed. They were presented both in writing and as pictures. The solution had to be discussed in a team. It required creativity and attention.			
	Trying to achieve a win for the team, innovativeness and finding the solutions caused the unforgettable memories.			
	Hearing, Listening, Seeing, Touching	Awareness of senses, Perceiving: *joy, *excitement, *pleasant feelings, *well-being, Unforgettable memories	Co-experience, Sense of humor, Team spirit	Functional tasks
Amusement park service (Järvinen and Walther, 2011)	I enjoyed the thousands of lights in the trees, the equipments and the dark evening. Moreover, the voice of a clattering roller coaster, the shrieking of children, and the smell of tar increased one's own enjoyment.			
(B-to-C service)	Voices of people, music performances, pumpkin parade, troubadours, and one's own nice companion brought about pleasant memories.			
	Experimenting the equipment of an amusement park in the dark and autumnal evening was a stronger experience when compared to daylight in a summer.			
	Hearing, Seeing,	Awareness of senses, Pleasant memories,	Co-experience, Perception of	Experimenting the equipments

	<i>Smelling, Touching</i>	<i>Perceiving: *contrasts, *darkness *pleasant feelings</i>	<i>laughter</i>	
Amusement park service (Karonen, 2012) (B-to-C service)	<p>A calm and different kind of a place compared to the amusement park ballyhoo. Visually touching, the babble of a brook was calming. There was a good lightning apart from the main area, birdsong, the feeling of a fairy tale forest.</p> <p>Hearing happy voices of the people from other equipments, hearing music from the circus fire show, many people gather together to watch the fire show, smell a burnt torch. The fire show is impressive in the darkening evening.</p> <p>Walking through the amusement park to watch the fire show on a big stage, a lot of people gather together, possibility to stay and sit about after the fire show and the hubbub to experience a calm atmosphere. The cold weather negatively influenced the comfort.</p>			
	<i>Hearing, Seeing, Sounding, Smelling, Touching</i>	<i>Perceiving: *creature existence, *pleasant feelings, *silence</i>	<i>Co-experience</i>	<i>Sensing coldness</i>

Table II. Perceived dimensions of pleasure based on event service experience in tourism services

In Table II, the perceived dimensions of pleasure based on the event service experiences were classified into four categories, namely basic senses; emotional dimensions of the event service experiences; social dimensions of the event service experiences; and functional dimensions of the event service experiences. Next, the perceived dimensions of pleasure based on the event service experiences in tourism services are categorized by the sources of pleasure in Table III.

Pleasure in the event/pleasure in person-event interaction/Seeking and finding pleasure in the event				
Physio-pleasures (basic senses)	Psycho-pleasures (emotional dimensions) (functional dimensions)		Socio-pleasures (social dimension)	Ideo-pleasures (dimensions of event meanings and personal value)
<i>Hearing, Listening, Looking, Seeing, Smelling, Sounding, Tasting, Touching</i>	<i>Awareness of senses, Fear, Magical feeling, Perceiving: *authenticity, *contrasts, *creature existence, *darkness, *excitement, *joy, *pleasant feelings,</i>	<i>Breath of wind, Doing by hands, Experimenting the equipments, Functional tasks, Scent, Scent of the forest, Sense of warmth, Sensing the campfire, Sensing coldness</i>	<i>Attendance, Co-experience, Perception of laughter, Sense of humor, Shared experiences, Team spirit</i>	<i>Finding strong memories, Learning new, Seeking the forest scenery, Perceiving: *history, *survival in nature, Sweeping lake vistas, Unforgettable memories, Willingness to indulge</i>

	<i>*silence, *well-being, *wilderness, Pleasant memories</i>			
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Table III. Perceived dimensions of pleasures based on event service experiences in tourism services

First, the emerged dimensions of pleasure based on the customers' event service experiences and judgments were classified into the following four categories as follows: basic senses as well as emotional, social, and functional dimensions (Table II). Subsequently, the emerged dimensions of pleasure were categorized by the four types of event pleasures, namely physio-pleasures (including basic senses); psycho-pleasures (including emotional and functional dimensions); socio-pleasures (including social dimensions), and ideo-pleasures (including dimensions of event meanings and personal value) (Table III). The sources of pleasure are categorized into: deriving pleasure in the event; gaining pleasure in the person-event interaction; and seeking and finding pleasure in the event. However, the borderlines between the sources of pleasure remain unclear.

Conclusions

The results indicated that the perceived dimensions of pleasure based on the event service experiences in tourism services entailed basic senses, and emotional, social, and functional dimensions of pleasure. The emerged dimensions are related to the place, event, time, activity, group of people, physical environment, and especially the participant's own personal experiences, all of which are interrelated. Alba and Williams (2013) introduced two perspectives to pursuing utilitarian or hedonic objectives. One of those two was a motivational perspective focusing on the meaning to achieve a hedonic objective. Maslow's general motivational theory with hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943; Stephens, 2000) composes at least five sets of goals including physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization needs (Stephens, 2000). Motivations are the needs to participate the event. When comparing the types of pleasure including the emerged dimensions (being experienced service) with Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943; Stephens, 2000), we can find similarities between them (Table IV).

<i>Types of pleasures including emerged dimensions</i>	<i>Maslow's hierarchy of needs</i>
Ideo-pleasures (dimensions of event meanings and personal value)	Self-actualizing needs
Psycho-pleasures (emotional dimensions: individual)	Love/belonging needs
Socio-pleasures (social dimensions: group relationship)	
Psycho-pleasures (functional dimensions)	Safety needs
Physio-pleasures (basic senses)	Physiological needs

Table IV: Types of pleasures including emerged dimensions vs. Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Physio-pleasures including basic senses refer to physiological needs (cf. Aydin, 2012; sensual pleasures); psycho-pleasures with functional dimensions refer to safety needs (cf. Aydin, 2012; sensual pleasures); socio-pleasures with social dimensions refer to love/belonging needs as well as psycho-pleasures with emotional dimensions (cf. Aydin, 2012; emotional, social, spiritual pleasures); and finally ideo-pleasures with dimensions of event meanings and personal value refer to self-actualizing needs (cf. Aydin, 2012; spiritual and intellectual pleasures). Ideo-pleasures indicate the output from the case event services being value in use based on individual experiences. Esteem needs (cf. Aydin, 2012; self acceptance pleasures) were not found in the case event services.

The results offer better customer understanding of the customers' experiences and judgements related to the event services. The practical implications for the service providers are that the emerged four types of pleasure offer ideas for conceptualizing event and tourism services. The event service provider might emphasize the importance of senses as attributes of the service concept when targeting the recall of the brand memory (cf. Morrin and Rathneswar, 2003). Moreover, the results offer ideas and tools for the tourism marketing managers and organisations for planning and implementing tourism services based on the types of pleasure.

The theoretical contribution of the paper is that the basic senses and emotional, functional and social dimensions form the outcome of the event service experiences, which together create a combined pleasure from the event (physio pleasure, psycho-pleasures, socio-pleasures and ideo-pleasures). The personal pleasure being an overall experience and based on the consumer's

evaluation is the combination of the types of the pleasures (value in use) (cf. Sandström *et al.*, 2008).

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